British charity media calls on its citizens not only to donate, but to prioritise other nationals. My data are the 2011 Children in Need broadcast and transcripts from six focus groups carried out in the fortnight after this show. The programme is unusual among charity media (especially telethons) in that its donations are raised both by and for people living in the same country (Britain). In my interpretation, the broadcast encourages donations, firstly by addressing viewers as having national identity and therefore obligations to other nationals (Poole 1999), and secondly by presenting Britain as a work-in-progress, with its own, otherwise hidden suffering.

In the present paper, I will examine how the show presents places of suffering within Britain, and how these are contrasted with other places presented in the show. The locations depicted in Children in Need can be divided into four categories, according to their framing as distinct locations, and their differing visual features. They are: the studio, other entertainment locations, fundraising locations, and sites of suffering. The latter can be further subdivided into: a) problematic places in which suffering occurs and b) the therapeutic places which are the site of change for formerly suffering beneficiaries.

I will argue that places of suffering appear starkly real, in comparison with, for example, the more fantastical studio space, and that therapeutic places become part of the representation of an ill-defined change for sufferers, which is linked to the act of donating.

I will also explore focus group data in which participants describe their spatial separation from other social groups. These accounts of spatial separation within Britain might sustain a reliance on the (re)presentation of the ‘reality’ of suffering in charity broadcasting. Unknown social groups reappear as if at a distance, as objects of pity (Boltanski 1990, Chouliaraki 2010).

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